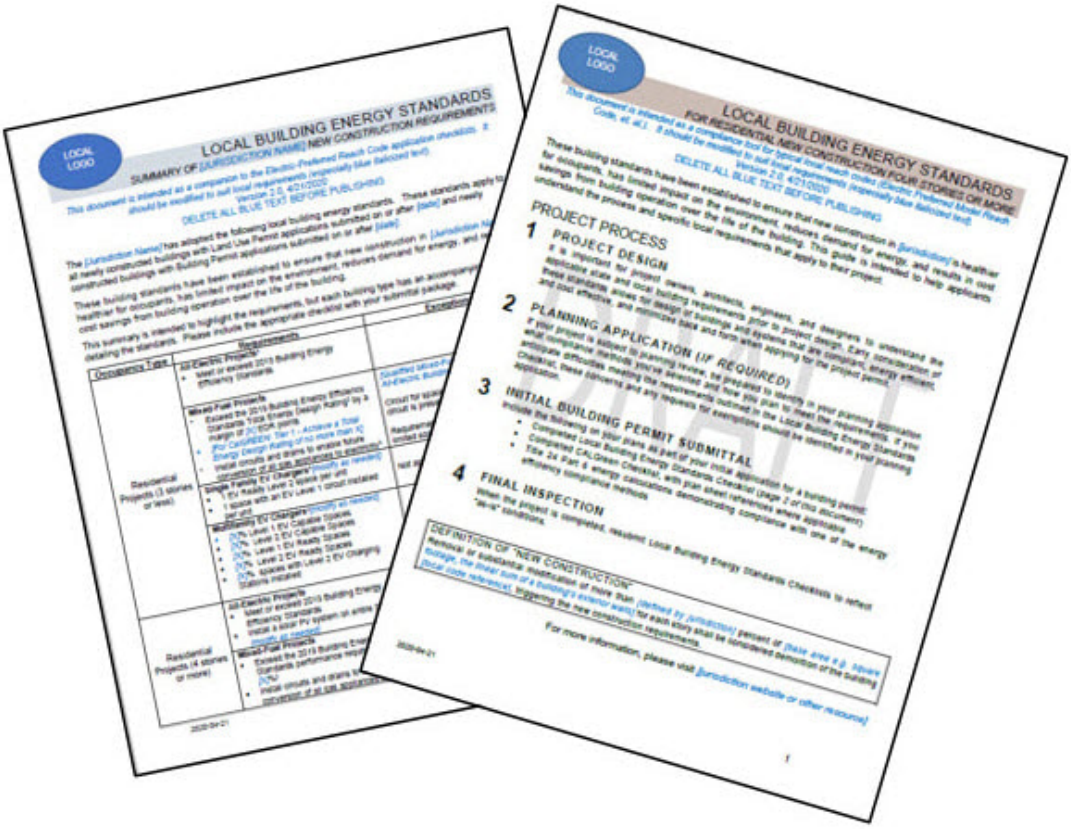
REACH CODE NEWS BRIEF: MAY 2020

REACH CODE IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT DEVELOPMENT UNDERWAY; FIRST DELIVERABLES AVAILABLE NOW



Comprehensive new implementation resources are being developed by a collaborative team spearheaded by the statewide Reach Codes team.

These resources include implementation checklists and handouts as well as training modules designed for local jurisdiction personnel involved with reach code implementation or enforcement.

Read the full story below.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June

June 2: SEEC Forum: State Panel on Promising Solutions for a Clean Energy Future

June 10: SEEC Forum: Community Energy Resilience for Local Governments

June 11: BayREN Forum

June 11-12: Clean Energy Residential Buildings , Parts 1 & 2- Key Systems and Energy Modeling for Santa Monica's Reach Codes

June 17: CABEC Brown Bag Webinar: Gloomy Ducts? HERS Verified Duct Design

June 18: SEEC Forum: Maintaining Local Momentum toward Climate Goals: Reach Code Collaboration



NEW THIS MONTH!



Q&A WITH BEN COOPER: HOW BENCHMARKING CAN INFORM REACH CODE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Ben Cooper has 14 years of experience in environmental and energy efficiency implementation and policy, with deep expertise in the area of multifamily energy efficiency sector. He currently manages a multifamily-focused grant from the California Energy Commission (CEC) as a Program Manager with Stop Waste, a public agency in Alameda County that helps businesses, schools and residents waste less and use water, energy, and other resources efficiently. Prior to that, Ben worked with the San Francisco Department of the Environment (SFE).

Q: Help us understand a little about what benchmarking is, Ben.

A: Benchmarking is really focused on the actual energy performance of existing buildings. The approach primarily looks at a building's vintage (age), size, and energy consumption over time so energy use can be objectively compared to similar building types. Because the data is weather-normalized, this comparison can be done on a local, regional or even national scale. A good analogy is the real estate appraisal

process. Once the energy consumption data is gathered, modeling software tools, such as the EPA's EnergyStar Portfolio Manager, are used to determine the property's overall score.

Q: How can this focus on existing buildings help or inform the reach code development process, then?

A: There are a few different ways the information gained from benchmarking can help the reach code process. First, benchmarking can identify and validate the best design practices behind a high-performing building. This, in turn, can help pinpoint the most effective approaches for new construction and retrofits.

Second, identifying both the highest- and lowest- performing buildings can help both building owners and local jurisdictions to make more informed decisions about where future improvements can be made and which can be most cost-effective. Often, this aspect may be most helpful to local jurisdictions in evaluating different programs related to energy efficiency and electrification.

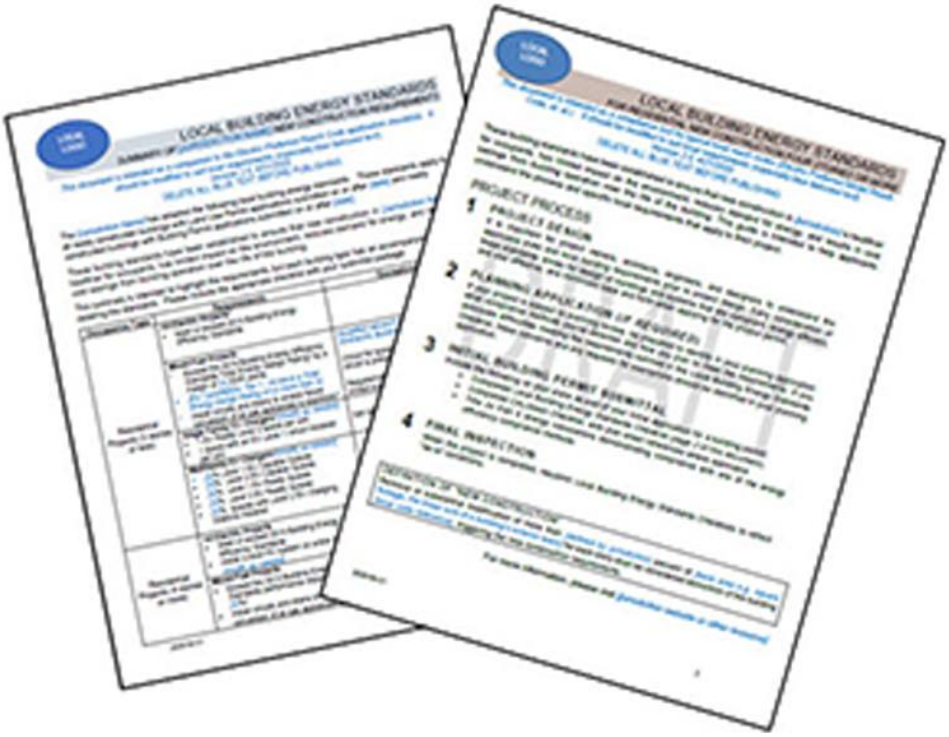
Finally, the process of benchmarking itself is one that educates the parties involved—the property owner, manager, maintenance staff, and the utility. Even prospective tenants can access the publicly available information to make informed decisions about potential utility costs. All of these groups are also valuable stakeholders in the reach code process and their collaboration can be vital to the successful implementation of local reach codes.

Q: What are some of the ways local jurisdictions can learn more about this area?

A: One terrific opportunity is coming up in June, at the BayREN Regional Forum. This **free webinar on June 11**is focusing on this topic. I will be sharing information about the findings from a California Energy Commission Local Government Challenge grant that focused on providing benchmarking technical assistance to building owners and managers. Eugene Lee from the Commission will be presenting, and he'll be joined by speakers from the cities of Brisbane, Berkeley, and San Francisco.

Q: Is there a report available on this program?

A: The report is under review; we anticipate presenting the formal findings to the Commission later in June. I would encourage interested individuals to visit the CEC website on benchmarking for more information.



REACH CODE IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT UNDERWAY; FIRST RESOURCES AVAILABLE NOW

Recognizing the importance of successful reach code implementation, the Statewide Utility Codes and Standards Reach Codes team is collaborating with numerous other organizations and individuals to produce simple, effective, no-cost resources that local jurisdictions can utilize in their own programs.

Collaborative partners include BayREN, the Building Decarbonization Coalition, East Bay Clean Energy, New Buildings Institute, Peninsula Clean Energy, Silicon Valley Clean Energy, and staff from numerous jurisdictions across the state.

These resources include implementation checklists and handouts as well as training modules designed for local jurisdiction personnel involved with reach code implementation or enforcement. All materials are unbranded to allow for easy adoption and branding by a city or county agency.

Implementation resources are being developed for several popular reach code structures:

- Energy performance
- All-electric

- EV-ready
- Photovoltaic (PV) systems

These resources are “all-inclusive” for three building types: Low-rise residential; High-rise residential; and Nonresidential. This means that the full scope of possible measures is included as a master document,

enabling users to quickly incorporate the specific content needed for their particular situation without complicated formatting or the need for proprietary software applications.

Local jurisdiction personnel may download the resources free of charge here.



COUNTY OF VENTURA CONSIDERING REACH CODE WITHIN 2040 GENERAL PLAN UPDATE. AFTER FIRES AND DURING COVID-19…GHG REDUCTIONS REMAIN A PRIORITY

The County of Ventura's Chief Building Official Ruben Barrera has his hands full these days. He oversees a staff of 30 with two regional offices who process up to 5,000 residential and commercial permits annually in the unincorporated part of the county. Barrera said that most of these permits are for custom homes, prisons, institutional buildings, colleges, dining halls, and other large buildings.

The County's population of 850,000 was hit hard in recent years by three major fires. Then the COVID-19 virus compelled the County Building and Safety Division to go paperless successfully, moving most services online. When he is not working on fire-related issues or the many implementation issues related to the newly-implemented 2019 statewide Building Energy Efficiency Standard, he and his Division have been working on a new reach code.

"The Planning Department came to me about a year ago and told me the General Plan update requires a reach code and informed me that my office was the lead. Our Board of Supervisors is asking for it and strongly supports reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions." Barrera is an above-code advocate who taught energy code classes at the College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita for years. "My office is under the Resource Management Agency which manages air quality and conservation, so it is a win-win-win. It's natural for us to lead," Barrera commented.

General Plan updates are excellent vehicles for embedding reach codes since they can be added easily to the Housing or Land Use elements. They will get revisited necessarily through the triennial energy code update and when the General Plan is updated—typically every 10 or 15 years, sometimes sooner. Barrera said, "We want to design a code that saves energy, reduces GHGs, and is also reasonable for the builders and the development community. The costs must be transparent and fair along with measurable benefits."

Barrera expects the Statewide Codes and Standards Program team to be a valuable collaborator in the reach code development process, "we have a long way to go, and they really are helping us get a handle on some of the major issues." Barrera is interested in bringing resources, both from the statewide team as well as the local energy provider, to the County of Ventura to help with the design of a reach code, and later with educating his staff, the public and builders. He added, "As our energy provider, Southern California Edison has been very helpful with training programs in the past, and we hope to work with them on reach code training. We need to make it easy to understand for builders and county staff responsible for enforcement."

Barrera notes that the County of Ventura and Los Angeles County frequently coordinate efforts and as the summer of 2020 begins, will continue to do so. “It’s very important to offer regional uniformity, so we are reaching out to Los Angeles County officials for opportunities to collaborate,” Ruben commented. “We work together on many issues.”

“The County of Ventura has a responsibility to show leadership to all of our cities and saving energy through reach codes sends the right signal,” Barrera commented. “Like many cities, many of our priorities are shifting; in our case due to the devastating fires and now, COVID-19. With such serious, life-and-death issues, prioritizing reach code development is challenging. The County remains committed to this process, however.”

The County maintains a website devoted to its General Plan progress as well as all related activities.



OTHER REACH CODE NEWS BRIEFS

October 2026 September 2026 August 2026
Archives